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RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT

Working in Johnson County

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PICTURE STORY 153
MARCH 1963

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The Story of Johnson County's Success



Five leaders of the county's development program are shown on Main Street of Mountain City. Left to right are: J. H. Nave, farmer and insurance man; R. J. Howard, banker and spearhead of the movement; John Rutherford, electric cooperative manager; R. D. Fritts, newspaper publisher; and McQuown Wright, farmer and merchant. N-48567

Glove factory plant manager Roy Little watches the work of employee Mary Coe, who lives on a farm near the plant. Little thought it would take a year and a half to reach production goals. The employees did it in 11 months. N-48529



From farm to Main Street in Mountain City, Tenn., Johnson County is on the upswing. Economic decline is being reversed with new payrolls. Outmigration is being halted, and some former residents are returning.

Today's situation in Johnson County contrasts sharply with that of just a few years ago.

Operators of the county's small hill farms had found it difficult — sometimes impossible — to compete with larger, level farms on which modern machines could be used. Business in the county's towns felt the pinch of low farm incomes. Underemployment became a bigger problem than unemployment.

Unable to see a future at home, the county's youth began to leave. A survey of one senior class of 106 students showed that only 10 wanted to remain in farming. Thirty-seven were sure they would leave to seek work elsewhere. From 1950 to 1960, the county's population dropped from 12,278 to 10,765. Of those who left, more than 1,000 were in the ages between 15 and 39.

Johnson County's problems were common to numerous other rural areas in many sections of America. Nationally, 10 million people left farming during the 1950's — an average outmigration of two people every minute. Some turned to nonfarm work that they might stay in rural America. Many could not find fulltime employment. Four million rural people became underemployed, and half of the nation's poverty was found in rural areas.

Along with the people of many other rural communities, those in Johnson County acted to stop their area's decline.

They created the Johnson County Industrial Commission. They set up an Industrial Committee. They began work on an industrial park and voted a \$400,000 bond issue to help bring industry into the county.

Shortly after the Area Redevelopment Act was passed in 1961, the Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA), Department of Commerce, designated Johnson County as a rural area eligible for assistance.

University of Tennessee Cooperative Extension Service workers and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) workers helped the local group prepare an overall economic development plan (OEDP). In this plan, the local people realistically outlined their problems, assets and liabilities, their goals, and the means of obtaining them.

Sixteen separate committees composed of about 200 local people looked into all aspects of the county's development problem, such as agriculture, natural resources, manufacturing and industrialization, recreation, education, conservation and watershed development.

The committees had the help of a USDA Technical Action Panel (TAP) made up of representatives of the Farmers Home Administration (FHA), Soil Conservation Service (SCS), Forest Service (FS), and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS).

The County Agricultural Extension Agent serves as liaison between the TAP and the local committees. The Home Demonstration Agent assisted the schools in making a detailed survey on what the students wanted in occupational training and opportunities. She worked also with the county health and welfare departments in preparing that part of the OEDP.

The results are impressive.

There's a 30-acre industrial park with a building containing 72,000 square feet of space on it, on ground that once was a farm. A garment factory occupies the building, providing employment for 204 men and women, increasing the area's annual payroll by \$500,000. There are plans to increase the employment by 100.

The industrial park has room for two more buildings as large as the first. Local people, by issuing county bonds, provided \$400,000 of the needed capital; a \$60,000 ARA loan and a \$46,300 grant paid for the park's sewage and water facilities. The Mountain Electric Cooperative, owned and operated by the local people, serves the park with electricity.

A cotton work-glove factory came into the county in 1962 and employs 115 men and women. It plans to expand to a new building and hire up to 200 people with an annual payroll of \$500,000.

A hosiery mill hires 20 people on a \$50,000 annual payroll.

Of the money so far invested in the county's industrial expansion program, nearly 80 percent came from the county's people themselves. Only 20 percent came from the Federal government and more than half of that is a loan which local people will pay back with interest.

The county bank reports deposits are \$809,256 greater than they were two years ago. Merchants along Main Street of Mountain City, the county seat, say that business already is picking up. Some businessmen have taken on additional help in the past year, part of the pyramiding effect of new money now being made and spent in the area.

Improvements also have been made in agriculture. An expanded dairy program has more than doubled milk sales. Increases have been made in sales of cattle and calves. Sales of potatoes, eggs and strawberries also are greater.

U.S. Department of Agriculture programs are helping. Farmers Home Administration has made loans totaling \$151,190 in the past two years. Conservation cost-sharing payments of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service run between \$42,000 and \$48,000 a year on about 800 different farms in the county. In the past two years, Federal Crop Insurance has protected the investments of Johnson County tobacco farmers for a \$105,000 liability. The Forest Service recently invested \$14,000 of Accelerated Public Works money in the Cherokee National Forest to reopen old trails, build footbridges, camping units and parking facilities, which will stimulate the county's plans for development of its recreational facilities. The Forest Service plans to invest an additional \$150,000 for further recreational and wildlife development in the National Forest. Still in process is a proposed small watershed project sponsored by the Johnson County Soil Conservation District and Shady Valley Watershed District to halt flooding of farmland by Beaver Dam Creek.

The Farm Credit System, supervised by the Farm Credit Administration, helped finance farmers through its various credit cooperatives. The Federal Land Bank Association of Johnson City (Washington County, Tenn.) has 46 loans totaling \$400,000 outstanding in Johnson County. The Mountain City branch office of the Eastern Tennessee Production Credit Association, Greenville, Tenn., made 150 loans for a total of \$400,000 in Johnson County in 1962. Tri-State Growers, Inc., a farmer cooperative at Mountain City, is a member of and obtains credit from the Bank for Cooperatives at Louisville, Ky. This farmer cooperative auctions vegetables and buys farm supplies for its members.

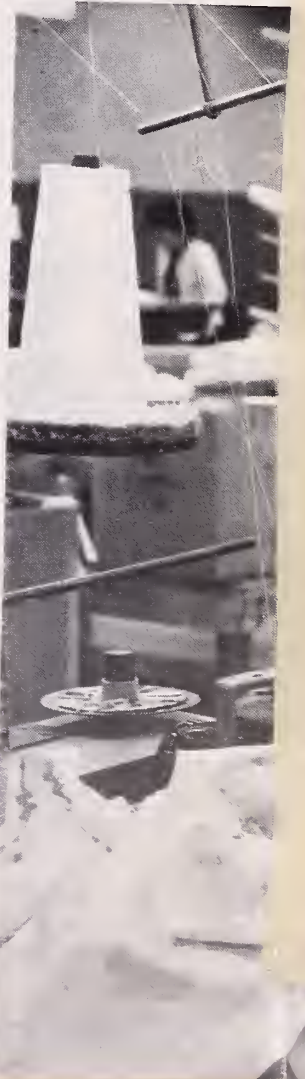
The new is now replacing the old in Johnson County. Over \$1 million additional money is being added to the county each year, through 350 jobs that did not exist two years ago. The county plans greater expansion. Farmers are enlarging their operations with money earned in the new plants. Business is up in the county. New red brick homes are replacing many of the old frame houses. More young people are staying in the county. Some who left are returning.

All of this was accomplished through coordinated rural areas development efforts of the people of Johnson County, using their own resources and those of the U. S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce.



Adding lifeblood to the new garment factory residential park, created from a farm, the State of Tennessee will build access roads to building and operation expects to settle there.

Mrs. Carl Taylor, a former school friend of her husband have bought a house in the county school friends left to programs. N-48511





Adding lifeblood to the rural community, the new garment factory rests in the industrial park, created from a farm. The county and the State of Tennessee will soon invest \$100,000 to build access roads to the park to facilitate building and operation of other plants it expects to settle there. N-48575



Employees, most of them from farms, are shown in this interior view of the garment factory. After bolts of material are spread out by shuttles (see cover picture, N-48572) they are cut into patterns by other men, and garments are assembled here at the rate of 5,000 a week. Availability of labor, power, transportation, were factors in the company's decision to settle in the county. N-48510

Mrs. Carl Taylor, a farm wife, is shown at work in the plant. With her income, she and her husband have bought more farmland. Several plant employees told her they would not be in the county now if they had not found work. Mrs. Taylor says all her high school friends left the county, but some have returned because of the development programs. N-48511



A depositor fills out a slip in the county's bank. On the wall is the first garment produced in the new factory, a symbol of the county's success. Deposits in the bank are up \$809,256 over two years ago. N-48516





Earl Howard, president of the Shady Valley Watershed District, looks over farmland damaged by the flooding of Beaver Dam Creek in the valley. T-967-6



Soil Conservation Service representative Ray Bryant, left, looks over Shady Valley with two members of the Shady Valley Watershed District, both farmers. A small watershed project to prevent flooding of farms is being sponsored by the watershed district and the Johnson County Soil Conservation District. SCS is helping the sponsoring local organizations to prepare a plan for the project. N-48568

A nearly-completed home stands near an old one, illustrating part of the change in the area. Several of the homes are financed with loans from Farmers Home Administration. N-48560



General farmer Carl Taylor throws armfuls of hay to two of his herd of beef cows on the hilly farm he and his wife own. Since Mrs. Taylor has been working (see page 5) they have added to their farmland, and use the additional income to help meet payments on their recently built home (rear). They have two children. N-48569



Paul Stout, left, a Farmers Home Administration home borrower in the county, talks with FHA county supervisor James Thompson about his new home. N-48584





Beef cattle farmer Wiley Stout, right, is visited by County Agent John Walker, left, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service representative Paul Matheson on his farm. Through efforts of ASCS, Stout adopted a system by which an inch-wide stream of water running out of a hill on his farm fills three 500-gallon tanks like this one with fresh water and could fill others down the valley. The \$50 cost of each concrete tank was easily made up in better use of grass and time and expense saved by not hauling water to the cattle by truck. N-48566



More students of Johnson County High School (above) can stay in the county if they wish to do so, because of new opportunities created by the development program. The county recently consolidated its schools and now plans to build a new high school. N-48561

A sign of the county's progress is the addition of new motel units by the owner, right. Tourist recreational aspects of the area are being promoted by the county's development committee, but this construction work is also a reflection of the new business coming into the county. N-48580

